



SECTION C: **CITIZEN INPUT REGARDING TRAILS**



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Public and Stakeholder Input

Public input is a critical component of any planning process. A long range plan must represent the long range goals of the citizens and residents who are going to fund the planned facilities, support them and ultimately use those planned facilities.

The City of Sugar Land has always had a high commitment to including citizen feedback in its planning and design processes. In light of the widespread interest in trails in all parts of the city, city staff undertook an intensive process to obtain both citizen and stakeholder opinions and ideas. Even more importantly, much of this feedback was received prior to beginning to designate priorities and locations for trail corridors, so that early ideas, opportunities and concerns could be included in the planning process.

The public input process included three major levels. These were;

- Citizen task force input
- Neighborhood level resident input
- Community wide citizen input
- City staff and elected official input
- Stakeholder input (primarily levee improvement districts and municipal improvement districts).

Citizen Task Force

A citizen committee was created to help guide development of the plan. The committee included community representatives that represented user groups, homeowner associations, levee district and park interests. User groups included runners, cyclists and equestrian users. All of the committee members had a high level of knowledge of the Sugar Land park system, and some had participated in the previous Comprehensive Plan and Citywide Parks Planning efforts. The committee met three times to discuss the goals for the plan, to look at opportunities for trails throughout the city, and to review potential opportunities. Members of the committee suggested many potential locations for trails throughout the city, as well as places where trails might create neighborhood concerns. Summaries of the comments received from the Task Force are included in the appendices of this report. The opportunities map prepared by the Task Force during one of its working meetings is shown on this page.

Key comments and input received from the Task Force included:

- Consider using levees or portions of levee corridors as trail opportunities. These areas are open, already used by residents for walking and running, and were relatively clear of existing obstacles.

Look for missing links between existing trail segments.

Enhance connections to the Town Center area, as the heart of Sugar Land.

Create connections and trails in all parts of Sugar Land.



Task force suggestions written on a map during one of the meetings





Neighborhood Level Resident Input – City staff met with representatives from over twenty neighborhood associations and citizen groups from throughout the city. These meetings were conducted over a four month period, and were used to obtain input on possible trail corridor locations in each neighborhood, as well as areas where residents might be concerned with placing trails. Questions and concerns raised by each group were documented and used when considering where trails might be placed throughout the city. Meetings were conducted with the following entities:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Quarterly Citywide HOA | Associations of First Colony |
| Commonwealth Civic Association | Sugarwood HOA |
| Oyster Point HOA | Chimneystone HOA |
| Covington Woods HOA | Sugar Mill HOA |
| Avalon HOA | Austin Park |
| Lakes of Austin Park | Imperial Woods HOA |
| Barrington Place | Glen Laurel HOA |
| Ragus Lake HOA | Covington West |
| Brookside Belknap | |

Key comments and input received from the Neighborhood Level meetings included:

- The majority of homeowners were in favor of the city developing additional trails throughout the city.
- Citizens noted that many of the potential trail corridors, such as along the tops of some levees, were already in use by area residents as places to walk or run.
- Residents were concerned about any potential impacts from increased crime or a decrease in security.
- Concern was expressed over the impact of a potential increase in activity along the proposed trail corridors resulting in a potential reduction in privacy.
- Parking would need to be accommodated in a way that did not create neighborhood obstacles.
- Citizens were interested in the maintenance of the trails and trail corridors, so that inadequate maintenance did not result in reductions in property values.
- Citizens asked about the potential impact of trails on property values.



“Any trail which is to survive must be in public ownership”

MYRON AVERY, Applachian Trailway News, January 1946

Community Wide Citizen Input

A major community workshop meeting was held at the Sugar Land Town Hall in April, 2007. The workshop included maps illustrating many alternative opportunity corridors for trails throughout the city. For citizen ease in reviewing these opportunity corridors, opportunities were presented on individual maps for each of five major sectors of Sugar Land. Opportunities for the Town Center area were also considered. During the four hour long workshop, citizens were invited to look at maps for their areas and to write comments directly on the maps. Over 80 residents of Sugar Land attended the meeting, and their major comments are as follows:

- Safety and policing is a major requirement for trail corridors;
- Many runners in attendance asked that the City use crushed granite where possible. They noted that concrete is hard on runners and walkers' legs and should be avoided on corridors that are intended to attract runners;
- Key crossings at Hwy 6, Hwy 59, and across the Brazos River are required. These represent major barriers that divide the city and make it more difficult to go from one part of the city to another.
- In many cases, there are currently relatively poor connections between many destinations. These destinations need to be factored into the plan and considered as each route is planned.
- Very often, there is no bicycle parking at each destination. This makes it difficult for cyclists to use the system to get to their final destination.
- The City of Sugar Land needs to consider an all weather trail along the Brazos River, and allow it to connect to other communities;
- Within the Brazos River corridor, small hills for mountain biking need to be added.
- There is an avid mountain biking community in Sugar Land.
- Sidewalks in the city are not wide enough, especially in areas with major retail and restaurants.
- More paths leading to mall, town center, etc. for all neighborhoods
- Lights on paths

Attendees referenced area trails that they considered as good examples or locations that could benefit from trails:

- Terry Hershey Park in Houston – mix of paved and natural trails, miles of connectivity.
- Memorial Park – people run there because there are no trails in Sugar Land.
- Missouri City – Sugar Land children attend Elkins High School and route is a beautiful ride.

A very high level of interest in trails and connections to the Town Center was expressed by citizens of Sugar Land at the Community wide meeting.

Input from Other Sugar Land Departments

Input was received from city departments including Planning, Engineering, Transportation, Drainage and the Police Department. Key comments and suggestions that were received include:

- Generally, existing trail corridors in Sugar Land are very safe. Only source of complaints is rowdy activity and occasional fighting by students near some middle school locations.
- Consideration could be given to the creation of a citywide police response unit that might be available to respond to citizen complaints along new trail corridors. These officers might be able to go to different locations around the city on a rotating basis to establish a security presence.
- Call boxes for safety are not seen as an absolute requirement by the Police Department, but could be considered along some major routes.
- Lighting may not be required along corridors that are not anticipated to be used at night.
- Traffic calming infrastructure such as traffic humps could be considered in some locations to help slow traffic in the vicinity of key at-grade crossings.
- Sidewalk and trail development requirements for new areas might be one consideration, but implementation strategy would be required. However, staff noted that most of these new communities already provide trail amenities.





Input from Key Stakeholder Entities

Meetings were held with the boards of each of the levee improvement districts that have facilities within the corporate boundaries of Sugar Land.

LID 14	FC LID
LID 17	LID 11
FC LID 2	LID 10
LID 2	LID 15
Burney Road MUD	

These meetings were held over a three month period in late 2006 and early 2007, and resulted in the following feedback.

- All of the districts provided positive feedback as to the idea of using levee corridors for trail facilities.
- Residents of each district who were represented on levee improvement district boards noted that the levee corridors were already in use as walking corridors, and that most residents would be in favor of their use as trail corridors.
- All stressed that maintaining and preserving the integrity of the levees was their primary concern.
- Determining the best location for trails within each corridor would depend on the engineering of each particular levee. Each levee district’s engineers would need to review and approve the proposed trail design.
- Many of the levee corridors include space at the toe of the levee which could accommodate trails.
- In some cases, the top of a levee could be used as a trail corridor, but the trail surface would have to allow periodic maintenance and inspection of the levees by that particular levee improvement district.
- Concrete trails along the top of the levee would have to be designed to fit within the top zone of the levee and would have to maintain the design height of the levee.
- Specific liability and safety concerns in each district would have to be addressed on a case by case basis, but were not perceived to be impediments to the use of the levee corridors for trails.
- Maintenance issues would have to be addressed for each corridor. Currently, each district is responsible for its own maintenance, such as mowing and periodic inspections. The introduction of trails might require more frequent mowing than what the district would normally do.
- A formal legal agreement that addresses the specific responsibilities and requirements of the City of Sugar Land and each individual improvement district will be required prior to moving forward with designing and developing each trail.

“ Few actions can do more to make urban areas safer, healthier, prettier, and more environmentally balanced than setting aside corridors or trails for walking, biking, wildlife watching, and just plain breaking up the monotony of cars and concrete.”

JAMES SNYDER, Publisher of *Environment Today*, 1990

